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# Nixon to Upgrade Hill Liaison

By David S. Broder

Washington Post Staff Writer

President Nixon is prepared to make his most senior staff members available to groups of senators and representatives for "give-and-take" discussion of all issues that may arise in Congress this year, the head of the White House legislative liaison staff said.

The offer of extensive, informal consultations with such top presidential advisers as H.R. (Bob) Haldean, John D. Ehrlichman, Henry A. Kissinger and Peter M. Flanigan came from William E. Timmons, the assistant to the President for congressional relations.

It was but one of several conciliatory steps outlined by Timmons in a lengthy interview last week, all designed to smooth over points of conflict that arose in the past two years between the Democratic Congress and the Republican White House.

The President's top lobbyist also said Mr. Nixon would seek to upgrade departmental legislative liaison jobs to meet complaints from Congress and would publicly support congressional efforts to improve the legislative budget process.

The latter step, Timmons said, could avert any repetition of last year's bitter quarrel between Congress and the President over the control of Federal expenditures.

The 42-year-old head of the White House congressional relations staff



H. R. HALDEAN

JOHN EHRLICHMAN

PETER FLANIGAN

... these Nixon advisers would have informal talks with congressmen.

said that Mr. Nixon was determined to do what he could to ease conflicts over executive privilege, the control of spending and the handling of legislative requests.

Of the three, the offer of informal consultations with top-level White House staffers represented perhaps the biggest step by the President to meet Capitol Hill criticisms.

Senators and Representatives of both parties have charged that Mr. Nixon has centralized decision-making

in his White House staff members, who, unlike Cabinet officials, can invoke the doctrine of executive privilege to refuse testimony to congressional committees handling legislation in their areas of responsibility.

The Senate Government Operations Committee, under its new chairman, Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr. (D-N.C.), is expected to challenge this authority in hearings this winter.

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Timmons said in the tape-recorded interview that Mr. Nixon "actually has not exerted executive privilege as much as other Presidents have." He said White House records indicate only three instances when congressional requests were refused on grounds of executive privilege in Mr. Nixon's first four years in office.

He also said that, without publicity, meetings had been arranged with interested legislators and such men as Daniel P. Moynihan, former counselor to the President, domestic affairs chief Ehrlichman and national security adviser Kissinger. The Kissinger sessions, he said, were held "informally at the Blair House and at Bill Fulbright's house and other places." (Sen. J. W. Fulbright of Arkansas is chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.)

Now, Timmons said, "I have a plan working" that would broaden those conferences into a program of regular "working lunches" or meetings between senior White House staff members and leading members of Congress involved with a particular issue.

"I'd like to see regular meetings, either down here or up on the Hill," he said, "with a good give-and-take issue exchange. . . . I hope we can do a lot of that this next year."

Timmons said the timing and format of the sessions had not yet been discussed with congressional leaders but that the project had the endorsement of the senior White House aides who would be involved.

Timmons specified in the interview that the meetings would have to be informal sessions, without a record or transcript, "not because there is something to hide, but because I'm afraid if it becomes a matter of record, it sets a precedent for them demanding it in the future. I think we've got to protect the President from that."

He also said the sessions could not violate "the tradition that White House staff people do not talk about personal communications with the President."

Whether meetings held under those restrictions would satisfy congressional demands for access to administration decision-making is not clear.

But Timmons said that "if they (the members of Congress) are not trying to demagogue it or trying to bring in cameras and embarrass us . . . if they are sincerely interesting in trying to find out something that they feel is important," the top White House aide would be available to them.

On the question of control of federal spending, which provoked a major

showdown with Congress at the end of the 1972 session, Timmons said "this President would be perfectly happy for Congress" to set its own budget ceiling.

"As long as it's reasonable," he said, "the President would accept that." There might still be disagreements between Congress and the Executive over the proper funding level for specific programs, but Timmons said:

"If they (the House and Senate) would get together . . . and set a ceiling based on expected income, I think the President would be very happy with that."

The congressional liaison chief said he thought the President might use the State of the Union address later this month "to prod" Congress to improve its own budgetmaking mechanism into something that would give it tighter control of fiscal policy than the existing system of more than a dozen separate appropriations bills.

"There is some resentment in Congress over the President interfering with . . . their own procedures," he acknowledged. "And I recognize that. But this area is so important . . . I would hope to see him make some statements either in the State of the Union message or in a press conference . . . urging them to come up with one."

Timmons said his own suggestion would be that the Democratic and Republican leaders of the House and Senate, the members of the House Ways and Means and Senate Finance committees and the two Appropriations Committees "get together and come up with what they feel is a proper ceiling" on spending.

"I'm talking about those that really have power . . . agreeing informally, if not formally, after consulting with the administration and the membership of House and Senate . . . and putting out a statement they could all sign, saying we think the budget for next year ought to be such-and-such a figure, based on projected income.

"They could say we have consulted and we think that such-and-such a percentage of this should be for defense, and so much for veterans, and so on, and therefore we urge the committees concerned to work within these guidelines."

Timmons called this "a practical first step" toward congressional control of spending, even if the recommendation is neither binding nor unanimous for them," he said, "and it would show their interest and concern" about the spending problem.

Timmons said Mr. Nixon "wants to get the best quality people in the departments' and agencies'" congressional liaison jobs "and wants them to carry a greater burden of their own legislative program load" in the next four years.

To that end, he said, the President will seek legislative authority to upgrade the congressional liaison job in each department to the assistant-secretary level. At present, he said, only the State Department and the Department of Health, Education and Welfare confer that status on their top Capitol Hill lobbyist.

Timmons said "the President feels it (the upgrading) would be helpful in attracting qualified people, in getting them involved in policy formulation, and in having them perceived as the President's men, carrying presidential commissions."

The fact that they would have to be confirmed in their jobs by the Senate would require Congress "to acknowledge that they accept these guys in their role," he added.

Timmons said that the White House "is recommending to the Cabinet officers those we think are qualified" for the proposed new jobs "and they in turn . . . will make their own determination. So far there has been no conflict . . . A Cabinet officer wouldn't want to put a congressional guy on that couldn't work with us, and certainly we wouldn't want to put a guy on that couldn't work with his Cabinet officer."

He said the names of the new departmental liaison officers would be released later.

"If we have capable people in all the departments, we feel it can take a load off of us," Timmons said. He is going into the new Congress with four of the same assistants he had last year — Richard K. Cook, Max L. Friedersdorf, Wallace H. Johnson and Tom C. Korologos. Two others who have worked with him — William Gifford and John Nidecker — have taken other assignments.

Timmons said he hoped the upgrading of the departmental liaison jobs "would ease a lot of friction that may have existed in the past. Members say such-and-such a Cabinet officer 'doesn't know who I am, and I serve on his committee.' Well, that's bad."

"By the end of June, I will be surprised if they complain they can't get through to anybody in the department. I will be very much surprised if there are any complaints like that."

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# White House Eyes the Hill

## Nixon's Liaison Man Warns of End-War Mood

By David S. Broder

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The top White House lobbyist has advised President Nixon that he "can expect some trouble" from Capitol Hill if there is no end-the-war agreement by spring.

William E. Timmons, the head of the President's congressional liaison office, said, "I don't think there will be any Vietnam resolutions passed in the month of January" and "I am cautiously optimistic that we can get into the spring if it takes that long."

But he warned that "at some point, I don't know when it is exactly, if there is no movement in Paris and the war continues, I think that they could try to take it away from the President."

Timmons, 42, a Tennessean who came to the White House from the staff of Sen. Bill Brock (R-Tenn.), discussed the prospects of revived congressional debate on Vietnam during an interview in his office last week, before President Nixon ordered an end to bombing above the 20th parallel.

In the course of the tape-recorded interview, he also:

- Discounted the effect of Republican disaffection from the President because of his limited personal campaigning.

cause of his limited personal campaigning.

- Pinpointed three freshman Southern Democrats as keys to the balance of the new senate.

- Said that, overall, the new Congress should not be much harder or easier for the President to deal with than the old one.

In discussing the possibility of a new conflict between Congress and the President over Vietnam, Timmons said that although "there will be some talk when they are all back together again . . . I don't think they will start any resolutions until after they've got their committees organized and heard the State of the Union and so forth."

He said he did not expect the bombing renewed Dec. 18 and halted yesterday or the breakdown in negotiations to become "an issue in the confirmation hearings" of Elliot L. Richardson as secretary of defense or on several appointees to second-echelon posts in the State and Defense Departments. The President hoped that those appointments cleared by the Armed Services and Foreign Relations Committees and confirmed by the Sen-

But Timmons said that "in February, we may see some movement" on anti-war resolutions. He noted that the foreign aid program is being funded under a continuing resolution that expires Feb. 28.

"That would seem to me to be a vehicle for them to tack on some Vietnam resolutions," the presidential assistant said.

"A lot depends on what happens between now and, say, Feb. 1," Timmons continued. "It depends on if we are back at the table. If we're engaged in very sensitive negotiations with Henry (Kissinger) . . . over in Paris, I think the Senate is responsible enough to go ahead and see it through for a while longer. So, I am cautiously optimistic that we will get into the spring if it takes that long . . . without any restrictions on the President through appropriations or authorizations.

tions on the President through appropriations or authorizations.

"But," he said, "if it folds up, if there is no movement of any kind, we can expect some trouble on that issue . . . The Senate has passed end-the-war things before, and the House has bailed out on them in conference, but they are not going to continue to do that forever, you know. . . ."

"At some point, if there is no movement in Paris and if the war continues, I think they could try to take it away from the President," Timmons said. "But, again, I am optimistic that isn't going to happen. I just think that what the President is doing is going to work and that we are going to have an agreement . . . before they are compelled to do that."

"I think that most of the members of Congress are really pulling for the President to pull it off. They'd love to get the thing behind them . . . and they know he's working his heart out to do it. . . . To even insinuate that he isn't really seeking peace is absurd. He has everything to gain by peace. . . ."

"But," Timmons said, "I am also aware that if they're not meeting in Paris, if there is no on-going negotiation, and the bombing is still going on, and there is no light at the end of the tunnel, that they are going to start moving" on Capitol Hill.

The White House legislative chief said the President's political gain in the Senate and the 13-seat Republican pickup in the House, "I don't really see any big philosophical

Timmons noted that "some of the net increase in the house" resulted from Republicans replacing southern Democrats "who voted about the same anyway." In the Senate, he said, conservative Republicans' victories in New Mexico, Oklahoma, Virginia and North Carolina were about offset by the defeat or retirement of Republican incumbents in Colorado, Iowa, Delaware, Maine and South Dakota.

"So I think the complexion of the

Senate will be about the same," he said "and a lot will depend on three key guys," the new Democratic senators from Kentucky, Georgia and Louisiana.

Kentucky's retiring Republican senator, John Sherman Cooper, "was with the administration on a number of issues," Timmons said, "but on a number he was quite independent of the administration and actually opposed it."

Referring to Cooper's successor, Sen.-elect Walter (Dee) Huddleston (D-Ky.), Timmons said, "I think Huddleston will probably swing from issue to issue much in the same way Cooper did, although the issues may be different."

Timmons said it will be "the same with Sam Nunn replacing Dave Gambrell" as the Georgia Senator. Both men are Democrats, but Nunn defeated Gambrell in the primary. "Gambrell was hardly an administration supporter," Timmons said, "and I think there is a hope that Sam Nunn may support the administration more than Gambrell did."

Timmons characterized the late Sen. Allen Ellender (D-La.) as "a maverick in some ways. He was generally supportive but he went off on his own some."

He said "it remains to be seen how" Ellender's successor, Sen. J. Bennett Johnston, Jr. (D) "will do down there."

"Those are the three keys," Timmons said. "If all three of them align on the anti-Administration side, then we have got some bad troubles. I could not expect that they would align with the administration consistently. I think more often they are going to be jumping, depending on the issues, be- administration forces . . . so I think it is kind of a wash."

The presidential aide said he was aware there is "some resentment among Republicans about what the

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should they support the administration, particularly on difficult issues?"

"Frankly," Timmons said, "I think that is a wrong approach for them to take, because I believe the President did quite a bit for candidates on the Hill."

He mentioned letters of endorsement, pictures in the Oval Office, television and radio clips, adding that "he sent out surrogates for them all over the place, to the point that some districts and states said, 'Oh my gosh, no more surrogates!'"

Timmons said, "I have reason to believe that . . . there was some money probably channeled into some areas . . . When a big giver gave as much as he felt he could give to the President's re-election, it was suggested that he give some to some selected candidates around."

He said he and his aides had alerted candidates to "issues we thought might be useful," like the spending ceiling,

and that "on the last weekend the President called a number of Republicans running for statewide office . . . and urged them to turn out a big vote and wished them well."

Timmons said "the big criticism we hear is that the President didn't come in and personally campaign. I am not convinced that the mere presence of the President in a city or a town necessarily elects the candidate there."

"So I think that if members are upset, they really have little cause to be. In fact, the Senators that lost—the Senate candidates—I think you can probably pin that on local issues more than the President's participation or lack of it."

But Timmons conceded that whatever the merits of the argument, "the Republican members may be a little more independent because they feel that the President and the administration didn't take care of them. And that could be harmful."

Also, he noted, they know "the President will not be running again . . . and they may be a little more independent for that reason."

"On the other hand," he said, "working for us is . . . the fact that the Democrats don't have to worry about cutting him down, because he's not going to be a candidate again . . . And that will help us a little bit."

"Also, they have to recognize that this President has some support around the country—61 per cent is a pretty healthy margin. The Democrats will probably be reluctant to take him on frontally, considering his mandate."

"There are some minuses up there and some pluses," Timmons concluded.

"On balance, I don't see the 93d Congress much different in terms of party ratios, in terms of philosophy, in terms of partisan attitude. I think we will have to go up and sell each bill on its merits, just like we have tried to do in the past."